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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NDJAMENA 000541

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STATE FOR AF/C PRM/AFR AND G/TIP  
KINSHASA FOR BRAZZAVILLE

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SUBJECT: SUDAN REBEL RECRUITMENT SURGE IN REFUGEE CAMPS  
WORRIES UN, NGOS - AND US

REF: NDJAMENA 527

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Classified By: DCM RGRIBBIN FOR REASONS 1.4 B&D

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SUMMARY  
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1.(C) UNHCR Acting Country Representative told Ambassador November 13 that he was deeply concerned regarding a recent surge in recruiting by Sudanese rebels, specifically the JEM rebels, in all of the camps in eastern Chad and asked for USG support for UNHCR efforts to convince the GOC on the necessity of safeguarding the civilian character of all refugee camps in the country. The Ambassador agreed that the increasing use of the camps for political and military ends by rebels was worrying and pledged USG support vis--vis the GOC. He noted that the current initial deployment of UN-trained and-mentored Chadian police and gendarmes to the camps was expected to have a deterrent effect on future recruitment among refugees by JEM or other armed groups.

12. (C) We share UNHCR,s concerns regarding what the senior UN official in Chad, SRSG Victor Angelo, has called the increasing "politicization" and "militarization" of the camps, particularly by the JEM. The SRSG notes that the restoration of "civil order" in the camps is exactly why the UN PKO MINURCAT, which he heads, has been training and has now begun to deploy Chadian police and gendarme teams to the camps. Unfortunately, up to now, the GOC reaction on this issue has been mixed -- a good deal of "agreement in principle" along with some indications of useful actions taken. The GOC,s life is complicated by the presence of the ethnically Zaghawa JEM in Chad and the military support that the JEM gave the GOC in the past. MINURCAT I must become fully deployed in the East, not only its Chadian police and gendarme camp-security element, but also its military liaison element (to ensure effective coordination between Chad security forces inside the camps and Chadian police, gendarmes, and military forces outside the camps), and the "nation-building" element - human rights, reform of the criminal justice system and territorial administration, etc. Only when and if MINURCAT I becomes fully deployed and employed will the real struggle to depoliticize and demilitarize the camps be truly joined. END SUMMARY.

13. (SBU) The Ambassador, accompanied by RefCoord, met with UNHCR Deputy Country Representative Gilbert Loubaki (currently Acting Country Representative) at his request

November 13 regarding a recent surge in recruitment of refugees by Sudanese rebel group JEM in several of the camps in eastern Chad. Loubaki noted that maintaining and protecting the civilian character of the refugee camps has been one of the most difficult challenges faced by UNHCR in its Chad operations. Since the establishment of the twelve camps in the East, refugees have been targeted for recruitment by the variety of armed groups present in the region and even at times by the Chadian military. Loubaki expressed concern at the latest increase in JEM recruitment activities in Gaga, Treguine, Bredjing, Farchana, Goz Amer, and Djabal camps. According to Loubaki, JEM recruiters had entered the camps armed and in uniform. He emphasized that these JEM recruitment parties had received travel authorization from the GoC and specifically from the Governor of the Ouaddai region of eastern Chad, in which nearly all the camps are located, to conduct their campaigns in the camps. In addition, according to Loubaki, UNHCR's Chad government counterpart, The Chadian National Refugee Agency (CNAR), which is currently responsible for refugee security, had facilitated their entry into the camps.

14. (SBU) Loubaki noted that armed recruitment is linked to specific problems with refugee verification in Am Nabak and Oure Cassoni camps. Loubaki informed the Ambassador that he had raised the problem directly with the Prime Minister and had received assurances of GOC action to halt further recruitment of refugees by armed groups. In addition to protection concerns raised by the presence of armed elements in the camps, UNHCR has been faced with difficulty completing verification exercises in Am Nabak and Oure Cassoni camps. UNHCR attempts in early October to verify refugees' identities and eligibility to receive assistance in Am Nabak led to resistance from the refugees and eventual threats to

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UNHCR staff involved in the exercise. As a result, all services except water delivery have been cut off in the camp. Refugees did not receive food distribution for the month of October. Following these events, Minister of the Interior Bachir sent a message to the relevant regional Governor (Wadi-Fira) October 23 instructing him to take all necessary action to restore order in and around the camp and to facilitate the success of humanitarian operations in the region. In the message, a copy of which was sent to the Embassy, the Minister acknowledged the government's responsibility to protect and ensure the civilian character of the camp and the need to reassure humanitarian partners of the GOC's engagement.

15. (C) Loubaki made it clear UNHCR would not renew its presence in the camp until certain conditions have been met. First, the eleven people responsible for committing violence against UNHCR staff must be brought to justice. Second, the Refugee Committee must be restructured to weed out active JEM elements. Third, local authorities must partner with UNHCR to clearly define methods for resolving future security problems. UNHCR has called off a similar verification in Oure Cassoni camp proposed for December due to resistance from refugees in that camp as well. In an effort to avoid having to stop services in Oure Cassoni, UNHCR has decided to postpone the exercise. As Loubaki noted to the Ambassador, UNHCR does not want to fight this battle on two fronts and will wait to see if its conditions for return in Am Nabak are met before it confronts resistance in another camp. Underlying refugee resistance to verification is the well-founded suspicion of UNHCR and its implementing partners that many camp residents in these two JEM-associated locations would not be found eligible to receive assistance in a properly conducted verification.

16. (SBU) Loubaki said he had raised the problem of JEM recruitment directly with the Prime Minister in a November 7 meeting and had received assurances of GoC action to halt future recruitment activities in the camps. He reported that

the UNHCR-Abeche Head of Office had also addressed the issue with the Governor of the region. In past meetings, he said, UNHCR had spoken with the Minister of the Interior as well as the Minister of Defense. Loubaki expressed frustration with the GOC's lack of action, so far, to halt armed recruitment in the refugee camps. The Ambassador said the USG would support UNHCR's efforts by reinforcing its anti-recruitment message with the GoC. He noted that the international community had encouraged the creation of a MINURCAT trained and supported police and gendarmes force specifically to address insecurity in the camps and to protect their civilian character. The Ambassador advocated giving this force (the Integrated Security Division, known by its French acronym DIS), which is in the process of being deployed to various camps (Ref A), a chance to do its job by acting as a deterrent to future recruitment campaigns.

17. (SBU) In separate conversations with UNHCR and Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) staff November 7, RefCoord was told that JEM recruiters threatened humanitarian staff and refugees with harm if they attempted to stop them from recruiting. HIAS reported that JEM recruiters in Goz Amer told refugees they were "hiding in the refugee camps and had forgotten Sudan," and that anyone trying to stop them would be "jailed, tortured, or killed" including NGO staff, local authorities, and refugees. As a result of the threats, HIAS immediately stopped all scheduled sensitization activities on the topic of recruitment and UNHCR canceled an anti-child recruitment mission headed to Goz Beida.

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COMMENT  
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18. (C) We share UNHCR's concerns regarding what the senior UN official in Chad, SRSG Victor Angelo, has called the increasing "politicization" and "militarization" of the camps, particularly by the JEM. The SRSG notes that the restoration of "civil order" in the camps is exactly why the UN PKO MINURCAT, which he heads, has been training and has now begun to deploy Chadian police and gendarme teams to the camps. Unfortunately, up to now, the GOC reaction on this issue has been mixed. There is a good deal of "agreement in principle" to keeping the camps orderly and unpoliticized -- the PM's expression of understanding to Loubaki is an example - along with some indications of useful actions taken - the Interior Minister's recent directive to the Governor of Wadi-Fira where Am Nabak camp is located might be an

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example of this. The GOC's life is complicated by the presence of the ethnically Zaghawa JEM in Chad and the military support that the JEM gave the GOC in the past. The great hope is for MINURCAT I to become fully deployed in the East, not only its Chadian police and gendarme camp-security element, but also its military liaison element (to ensure effective coordination between Chad security forces inside the camps and Chadian police, gendarmes, and military forces outside the camps), and the "nation-building" element - human rights, reform of the criminal justice system and territorial administration, etc. Only when and if MINURCAT I becomes fully deployed and employed will the real struggle to depoliticize and demilitarize the camps be truly joined.

19. (U) TRIPOLI MINIMIZE CONSIDERED.

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